

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, July 29, 2022

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Curlee Named SC PLT Outstanding Educator of the Year

COLUMBIA — Diane Curlee of Neeses has been named the 2022 South Carolina Project Learning Tree Jerry L. Shrum Outstanding Educator of the Year. She was selected by the South Carolina PLT Steering Committee.

Curlee serves as the education coordinator for the Orangeburg County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD).

“The huge strength of the PLT curriculum is that participants learn how to think, not what to think, by participating in the activities,” said Curlee. “PLT allows for discovery of knowledge; that is what makes the use of the PLT curriculum awesome.”



Diane Curlee

Curlee’s first experience with PLT was in 1992 while she was teaching high school science at Bowman Academy in Bowman, S.C. Coincidentally, the workshop that introduced PLT to her was part of a two-week workshop sponsored by the Orangeburg County SWCD, where she became the part-time education coordinator in 1999 and transitioned into a full-time role there in 2000.

During her time with Orangeburg County SCWD, Curlee has used PLT curriculum in workshops, camps and classes. She has sent notifications to other educators to alert them about upcoming PLT trainings in the area. She has also promoted PLT in workshops by using PLT lessons in trainings and uses PLT materials to teach children about the forest, particularly “We All Need Trees.” Gabby Greenleaves, a tree costume purchased through a forestry grant more than two decades ago, has also become well known in Orangeburg Country for being used along with PLT in programs for Arbor Day and Earth Day.

Curlee’s work with the Orangeburg County SCWD hasn’t gone unnoticed, as it received the South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts Outstanding District award in 2010 in recognition of the environmental education programs presented by the district.

Curlee has also completed Habitat Steward training by the SC Wildlife Federation, Project WET facilitator training, Sandhills Master Naturalist training and is a certified SC Adopt-A-Stream volunteer. She is the education collaborator with SI Group in Orangeburg, consulting with them on the “Hundred Acre Wood” buffer, which is a certified Corporate Lands for Learning by the Wildlife Habitat Council. She is also the awards and nominations chair for the Environmental Education Association of SC and the Edisto-Savannah Area representative and chair of the benevolence and scholarship committees.

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Project Learning Tree is a nationwide, award-winning environmental education program that supplements curricula used by teachers, parents, and community leaders for students from preschool to 12th grade. A program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, PLT uses trees and forests as windows on the world to advance environmental literacy and promote stewardship to students while fostering professional development among the educators who use it. In South Carolina, PLT is sponsored by the Forestry Association of South Carolina’s SC Forestry Foundation, the SC Forestry Commission and the State Department of Education.